



Westlands Water District

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CALFED BAY-DELTA PROGRAM POSITION STATEMENT OCTOBER 1998

OVERVIEW OF WESTLANDS WATER DISTRICT

Westlands Water District is one of the most fertile, productive and diversified farming regions in the nation. The District provides water service to approximately 600,000 acres of highly productive farmland on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley. Westlands farmers produce over 50 different commercial fiber and food crops sold for the fresh, dry, canned or frozen food markets, both domestic and export. Annual gross farm product from crops grown in Westlands typically exceeds \$750 million. Farmers in the District are a significant source of employment and economic productivity for Fresno and Kings counties. The agricultural backbone of Fresno — the number one agricultural county in the nation — is firmly supported by the productivity of Westlands farmers.

Westlands Water District is a leader in innovation and progressive water policy. Westlands farmers are internationally recognized for the efficient irrigation technology used in the District and have one of the highest seasonal application efficiency ratings in the nation. Westlands has acquired over 1.4 million acre feet of water supplies through transfers and exchanges over the past 10 years to support water user demand. Westlands also has recently entered an agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation to retire up to 15,000 acres of lands within the District to address drainage and water supply issues.

WESTLANDS' WATER SUPPLY

Westlands is the largest Central Valley Project agricultural water contractor, with a contract entitlement of 1,150,000 acre-feet. Until 1990, the District received a full allocation of this entitlement and was able to acquire additional CVP supplies to meet the needs of the west side farmers. Today, the accumulated impacts of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act, Endangered Species Act, and the Bay-Delta Accord have reduced the District's average CVP allocation by approximately 280,000 to 400,000 acre feet. Approximately 25% to 35% of Westlands' contract entitlement has been redirected to environmental and wildlife purposes.

Westlands' support of the Bay-Delta Accord was based on recognition that environmental protections and improvements are necessary components of reliable water supplies to Valley agriculture and a healthy State economy. The District contributed additional supplies of water to meet Accord objectives in anticipation that the State Water Resources Control Board water quality hearings and the CALFED Bay-Delta Program would restore this "loan" of water supplies to environmental improvement.

THE CALFED PROCESS

CALFED is developing a preferred alternative to address problems associated with the Bay-Delta. A major principle of the CALFED process is to develop a balanced solution that can be supported by all of California. As part of this process, CALFED is preparing a Stage 1 implementation plan which identifies early actions to be taken over the first seven years after the preferred alternative is selected.

WESTLANDS' CONCERNS

Westlands is concerned the CALFED process is no longer committed to addressing environmental restoration, levee improvements, water quality and water supply reliability with equal priority and balance.

The CALFED process is ignoring the water supply and financial contributions made by CVP export contractors and is now proposing to further reduce water supply reliability to those water users as part of Stage 1 implementation.

The CALFED Program disregards technical data which strongly support the need for additional storage and isolated conveyance around the Delta to meet the overall water quality and water supply objectives.

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COMPONENTS OF CALFED SUCCESS

SHORT-TERM CERTAINTY AND RELIABILITY

CALFED must extend the provisions of the Bay-Delta Accord beyond December 1998 to such time that operating guidelines resulting from the CALFED PEIS/R record of decision are implemented. CALFED also must move aggressively to develop a 1999 Operations Plan consistent with the No-Net Loss provisions of the Accord to provide assurances regarding project operations and short-term export water supplies.

CVP IMPROVEMENT ACT INTEGRATION

CALFED must fully integrate existing and outlying CVPIA programs and objectives into Stage 1 and subsequent actions. CVPIA objectives related to Anadromous Fish Restoration, b(2) water, and Trinity River are the same as CALFED objectives. CVPIA implementation should not occur outside the CALFED program.

WATER SUPPLY IMPROVEMENTS

CALFED must provide immediate water supply improvements as part of Stage 1 implementation to CVP ag export contractors at levels above those currently available since implementation of the Accord. The Stage 1 implementation program must include phased improvements in agricultural export water supplies and increases in storage concurrent with improvements in ecosystem restoration, water quality and levee stability. Failure to implement a program whereby all interests incrementally get better together will result in failure of CALFED.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOUNTABILITY

CALFED must fully incorporate principles and programs that require justification and accountability for environmental uses of water. Environmental uses of the State's limited water supply should be constrained by the same legal, regulatory, fiscal and physical limits that affect other water users.

STORAGE & CONVEYANCE

CALFED must include strong commitments to and early implementation of storage and conveyance facilities to replace CVP agricultural export supplies lost to CVPIA implementation and the Accord. Storage and conveyance decisions must be based on technical analysis and scientifically supported conclusions rather than influenced by political forces.

ALLOCATION OF COSTS TO SUSTAIN AG ECONOMY

CALFED must allocate costs in a manner that will sustain the State's vibrant agricultural economy. CALFED must not include any effort to require agricultural users to pay any additional costs to replace water taken for environmental uses through regulatory actions, or to replace water dedicated to environmental protections by legislative actions.

FEASIBLE SOFT PATH PROGRAMS LINKED WITH INFRASTRUCTURE

CALFED must quantify and acknowledge existing "soft path" commitments made by CVP agricultural exporters and identify their limitations as part of the overall programmatic solution. CALFED must recognize that expanded, reliable water markets require increased storage and conveyance facilities. CALFED must acknowledge expanded investments in high-cost irrigation improvement systems require adequate water supply reliability to support the investment. CALFED must provide technical and financial assistance to further advance these solution components as part of the total solution.